DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 473 233 SP 041 358

AUTHOR	Kealey, Robert J., Comp.
TITLE	Instructional Programs: Ways To Enrich Your Curriculum.
INSTITUTION	National Catholic Educational Association, Washington, DC. Dept. of Elementary Schools.
ISBN	ISBN-1-55833-288-X
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	95p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Department of Elementary Schools, National Catholic Educational Association, 1077 30th Street, N.W., Suite 100, Washington, DC 20007-3852. Tel: 202-337-6232; Web site: http://www.ncea.org.
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Collected Works - General (020) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Persuasive Discourse; *Catholic Schools; Disabilities; Educational Technology; Elementary Secondary Education; Full Day Half Day Schedules; Holidays; Love; Reading Habits; *Religious Education; Scheduling; Service Learning; Social Services; Special Needs Students; Student Evaluation; Summer Programs; Thinking Skills; Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS	Character Education; Stewardship

ABSTRACT

This book is one in a series that present stories by practitioners in Catholic schools. The papers include: "The Write Traits: Trait-Based Writing Assessment and Instruction for the 21st Century" (Arlene Bertellotti-Weidner); "What's in a Name?" (James Bleecker); "What is a Christ-Centered Environment?" (Michael L. Brock); "Serving Others at St. George School" (Mary Ann Burns); "Forming Support for Students with Disabilities in a Catholic School" (Nancy Collins); "POWER for Learning" (Bonnie Diefendorf); "Scripture and Love" (Sr. Monica Paul Fraser); "Share a Little Bit of Your Love Day: A Service Learning Experience" (Pamela W. Fulham); "ENCORE!!!" (Nancy L. Genzel); "Challenging Students to Read" (Anthony Grasso); "Saints' Families" (Debra Haney); "Eighth Graders Become Thinkers and Innovators through Technology" (Rosemary Henry-Burrough); "Framing Social Service Programs during the School Year" (Sr. Judith Kenaan); "Breaking Down the Walls: Meeting the Special Needs of Students in Catholic Schools" (Janet M. Klosinski); "The All-Day Kindergarten Program" (Evelyn M. Nordberg); "Making Changes: A Middle School Schedule in Progress" (Marie Rinaudo); "Veterans Day and How We Celebrate It" (Barbara C. Sawyer); "Let's Have Fun This Summer" (Florence Schmidt); "Character Education" (Nancy Tattner); "Fun in the Sun at St. Paul's Summer Enrichment Program" (Rosemary Vahey); "Home Base" (Ned Vanders); "Pennies from Heaven Stewardship Program" (Lynette Varner); "Apostolic Service Program" (Patricia Vesely); and "Forensic Program" (Beatrice Weiland). (SM)

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Collected by Robert J. Kealey, Ed.D.

Department of Elementary Schools
National Catholic Educational Association

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1077 30th St., NW, Suite 100
Washington, D.C. 20007-3852
ISBN: 1-55833-288-X

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Preface

For the past few years your NCEA Department of Elementary Schools has been encouraging schools to become twenty-first Catholic schools through the program *21st Century Curriculum: Faith, Values, Excellence.* Curriculum in this context means all the activities sponsored by the school. It includes what is to be taught, how it is taught, the social activities sponsored by the school, the interactions of students and teachers, etc. Since we are Catholic schools these activities must include programs that foster the spiritual development (ongoing evangelization) of the students. Values (virtues) are to be integrated into all aspects of the curriculum. The students are to be challenged in word and example to live out their Christian calling. Finally, Catholic schools are committed to excellence. Providing an excellent educational and faith formation program is a matter of justice.

As part of the *21st Century Curriculum: Faith, Values, Excellence,* NCEA seeks to share stories of successful programs with its members. The present book is one in a series of books published by the NCEA Department of Elementary Schools illustrating such programs. The books began with the three volume series *American Catholic Schools for the 21st Century: Reflections on the Future of Catholic Elementary Schools.* It continued with such books as the following: *Ensuring the Catholic Identity of the School, Programs that Educate* and *Examples of the Integration of Technology in the Classroom.* These volumes present stories by

practitioners in the field. These are actual programs that are carried out on a daily basis. The current publication presents 24 more such stories. Catholic schools throughout the United States are a community and this community is best manifested when schools share their best practices with one another.

Your NCEA Department of Elementary Schools is grateful to members of past principals' academies who contributed their stories for this book. Their assignment for attending the academy was to share one of their success stories. Your department also expresses its appreciation to Janice Kraus, editorial assistant, who edited this work. Finally its is grateful to Beatriz Ruiz of the NCEA Communications Department for her work in developing the cover and laying out the pages of the book.

We offer this book to our members in the hope that you will read the stories, find them helpful, and adapt them to your own school. If you are able to take only one small part of a story and make the necessary adaptations, this book will have satisfied its goal. Please feel free to communicate with NCEA (nceaelem@ncea.org) about these stories and share your own experiences with NCEA so it can share them with all the Catholic elementary schools of the country.

Janet P. Murray, M.A.
President

Robert J. Kealey, Ed.D.
Executive Director

Department of Elementary Schools
National Catholic Educational Association
Feast of St. John Baptist de La Salle, Patron of Teachers, 2002

The Write Traits Trait-Based Writing Assessment and Instruction for the 21st Century

Arlene Bertellotti-Weidner
Principal
St. Charles School
San Carlos, CA

The 6-Traits of Writing is a professional development program that gives teachers everything they need to teach students how to create and assess their own writing using six key characteristics:

- Idea Development
- Organization
- Voice
- Word Choice
- Sentence Fluency, and
- Conventions.

The program puts the language of writing into the hands of the writer. It gives students the rubric to assess their own or

others' writing. Moreover, because of these tools, it helps students assume some of the responsibility for the quality and/or the grade of the writing they produce.

In an effort to fulfill our mission to challenge students to reach their fullest potential, we began to look at areas in the curriculum we thought needed improvement. Three years ago, using the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's *Curriculum Mapping: Charting the Course for Content*, my faculty and I took a long look at the writing process at St. Charles School. Using the procedures described in ASGD's manual, we surveyed our entire writing program from kindergarten through eighth grade. We disseminated information in September and actually began the work in November. The teachers were asked to look back into their lesson plans and draw out any lesson directly involved with teaching a skill related to prewriting or writing. The mapping tool provided worksheets for recording, and because I asked for lessons already taught, the teachers did not have to spend the extra time it would take to create something entirely new. This gathering exercise continued at approximately two-month intervals until we had a picture of the writing process throughout the school year. Finally, we put all this material into grade level maps, comparing the continuity and content across all grade levels.

While this exercise was beneficial, we were not happy with the results. We found that many lessons in grammar, spelling, and punctuation were taught throughout the year in all grades. Using these lessons primarily, we asked the kids to produce writing pieces. "Just give them a prompt, tell them to write a five-sentence paragraph with a beginning, middle and ending, collect it and grade it." The paragraphs improved slightly over time, depending on the topic, but no one was overly excited about the results. We concluded that the problem centered on the fact that we were teaching only mechanics and assuming that the children would produce wonderful pieces of writing just because they could punctuate properly, write complete sentences and spell correctly. We were determined to find something that would help our students be successful and creative writers.

In discussing writing with a friend, she raved at how her young son's writing had improved. She described the method her son was taught in his public school classroom, the criteria he used to write, and the rubric he possessed for self-assessing. Talking with the principal at his school, I learned they were using the 6-Traits of Writing. I decided to send my Vice Principal to the first training session I could find. She found the training very impressive and informative.

To implement our program at St. Charles School, we asked trainer Fred Wolfe to present a two day workshop for our faculty and staff last August. The presentation, content and ideas shared during the workshop energized my faculty. The binder that Mr. Wolfe provided for all the participants was informative and comprehensive. It is full of ideas, samples of all levels of writing, examples of rubrics, and descriptions of the six components of writing as prescribed in the 6-Traits writing program. He explained to all the teachers at the workshop that the traits-based writing approach is a shared-writers' language that helps students write better drafts and revise with confidence. This shared-writers' language is taught to the students so they can question their own first writings, rewrite, think again, and finally complete their work.

Revision is one of the most difficult skills to teach children. For most children, revising only means cleaning up the spelling and making it neater, or adding a few capital letters and/or commas. This is just a small part of revision and is actually one of the traits cited above (Conventions). It is what we were teaching year after year at St. Charles School. Important, yes, but ideas, organization, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency really make the final product personal. Add conventions and you have the writing instruction component of this program. Students need to know what these are and what they mean before they attempt to write. When they know what we as teachers are asking them to do, the process of good writing becomes attainable.

The second element of good writing is to be able to assess your work. To assess one's work one needs a clearly defined

rubric. 6-Traits puts a very clear rubric in the teachers' hands. It also created a clear rubric for the middle school child to use, and a simplified version for the emerging writer as well. The program helps them learn to use the self-assessing tool, encouraging them with the saying: "What you can assess, you can revise."

We are pleased with the success of the program. It allows our students to shine in the areas of writing where their strengths lie, and helps them build on the areas that need more clarification. In such a short piece I cannot do this program justice. However, *Creating Writers,* by Vicki Spandel is a great source of information about the program. More information is also available at www.greatsource.com. Or you may e-mail Ms. Spandel at Vicki_Spandel@hmco.com. If I can be of any assistance, my e-mail address is aobert@stcharlesschoolsc.org.

Happy Writing!

What's in a Name?

James Bleecker
Principal
St. James Catholic School
Oklahoma City, OK

The first day after I had accepted the position of principal at St. James, I was talking to a friend of mine. I told this person how excited I was to be starting out as a principal at St. James School. She then casually asked, "That's a Catholic school, isn't it?

That was the question that we began asking ourselves at the beginning of the school year. We were asked to identify all the elements that we thought were necessary to identify ourselves as a Catholic school. We looked at liturgy, symbols, and prayer. After evaluating all of these elements, we decided that we truly could hold ourselves out as a Catholic school. Then why were members of our own Catholic community not aware that we were a Catholic school?

I went back to the question my friend had asked me. We weren't identified as a Catholic school because it wasn't reflected in our name. In fact, we looked back over nearly fifty years of the school's history and saw that only a few times was the name "St. James CATHOLIC School" ever used. All of the stationery, marketing materials, and publications used "St. James School." We went back through the yearbooks and found that, with a few exceptions, referred to the school as "St. James School." We

pulled out t-shirts from the archives and found that most of them said "St. James." Most of them did not even identify us as a school. Looking through newspaper articles, few if any made reference to our school as a Catholic school. Even our school marquee, for which we paid several thousand dollars, says "St. James School."

All of this research led us to the conclusion that perhaps it was time to put the word "Catholic" back in our name. On the surface, it sounds simple enough. I also know that this has been a trend in other schools which also have suffered from an identity issue. For us, such a simple solution seemed overwhelming to enact. Where to start?

The answer came when I was in the office and the phone rang. The school secretary answered and said, "Good morning, St. James School!" I immediately realized that this was the first contact many strangers have with our school. I told the secretary to start putting the word "Catholic" in the name. I haven't had to fine or punish her yet, but she is working at remembering. After all, eight years of answering the phone one way does not lend itself easily to change.

After that, the rest of the plan seemed to fall into place. It was time to redesign our stationery. I hired a professional graphic designer to do the work. In looking at designs for the letterhead, we soon realized that we also need to update our school logo. It didn't represent the place that Christ holds in our school. So we went to work on redesigning the logo as well. A committee was formed and started to identify the ideas that we wanted to present in our logo. Soon we had a design that we all are proud to have as our own. Now, with the name and logo in place, our stationery looks great. We also did the same with our marketing materials.

It will take more effort on our part to bring about the change. I think that it will help us in our community and no longer will we be questioned as to whether or not we are a Catholic school.

What is a Christ-Centered Environment?

Michael L. Brock
Principal
Mary Immaculate School
Farmers Branch (Dallas), TX

The mission of Mary Immaculate School in Farmers Branch (Dallas), Texas, is to provide academic excellence within a Catholic and Christ-centered environment. That mission statement is hardly unique for a Catholic school; in fact, it sounds rather generic, if not banal. But the simple word "environment" holds the key to its uniqueness for us.

It is our contention that the greatest challenge facing Catholic schools today is that of creating an environment, a community, in which all parties – students, parents, teachers, and staff – can follow the example of Jesus by actively living the virtues He modeled, particularly those virtues that relate to how we treat and deal with each other. This is the question that faces all of us in Catholic education today: since we are a Catholic school, how should we be treating one another? And if our Catholicity does not result in treating each other better, is it then of any value? How should principals treat teachers? How should teachers treat students and each other? How should students

treat each other and their teachers? And what processes need to be put in place to ensure that these are not just words we use, but practices that we can regularly experience?

In my experience, I have found that we leaders in Catholic education do a very good job of teaching the truths of the Catholic faith and teaching the Scriptures, but not as effective a job of creating a community based on respectfulness, empathy, civility, and brother/sisterhood, guided by the example of Jesus. And we fall short, not because we think it isn't important, but because we haven't made the effort to look outside our boundaries for models of interpersonal relationships. The Bible gives us the big picture of what love is all about, but it is up to all of us to come up with the details, and these details are not restricted to a particular religious belief. I have made it my primary responsibility during the past ten years to identify these details and to put in place the processes needed to make them a reality in our community.

How are we accomplishing that? At Mary Immaculate School we have attempted to meet this need over the years by a variety of means. We have related secular programs that teach positive virtues (e.g., *Positive Discipline, Developing Capable People,* and *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*) to our Catholic Christian faith and then applied these insights to our daily interactions with each other, our school parents, and our students. Our teachers and staff have spent a full year experiencing each of the above programs in order to improve our interpersonal relationships. We have changed, for example, the processes that govern the way faculty meetings take place, the way student counseling takes place, and the way parents are brought into the community and involved in the school, all with the goal of creating a more respectful and, therefore, more Christ-like, environment.

The key, we have found, is in changing the processes. When we hold our faculty meetings in a circle, we find that communication and respect for others is facilitated. When we meet with students on their level, sitting together at a conference table, and make the effort to find out what's going on in their

world, we find that barriers drop and they open up. When we provide formal processes built around our Strategic Plan for inviting parents into the input process, we find that their "buy-in" to the school is enhanced and they're more on board with whatever decisions flow from the process.

All of the above is not meant to suggest that we always succeed, just that we have identified the goal of improving the processes through which we interact with each other, so that respectfulness becomes more the norm than otherwise. We have a long way to go, but the processes have been identified; therefore, when we fall short – and we will – we will know where to go to get back on track.

Serving Others at St. George School

Mary Ann Burns
Principal
St. George School
Linn, MO

The mission of St. George School in Linn, Missouri, is more than our statement of belief. It is the driving force behind our goals, programs, and projects. Our mission states: "The mission of St. George School, in partnership with family, Church and community, is to provide Catholic education of the highest quality that promotes the maximum potential in spiritual, academic, physical, emotional and social development. Dedicated to Christ's life and teachings, as a school and community, we accept our responsibility to love one another, to respect each person's uniqueness and to prepare our students to be successful, responsible Christian members of society."

We have many service projects in our school, for our school, parish and community. Each month a class adopts the Good Shepherd Food Pantry in our community and brings goods to help those in need. Instead of gift exchanges at Christmas, our classes adopt needy families, collect money and buy games, toys, clothes and other necessary items for the family. Our students, either individually or as a class (in the primary grades) adopt elderly "pals": shut-ins and nursing home patients with whom

they communicate throughout the year. Our junior high students visit the local nursing homes and present seasonal programs and sing songs with and to the patients. Our Lenten Rice Bowl collections are divided between the mission programs of the two groups (SSND and Irish Sisters of Mercy) who have worked in our school. Our school has participated in the St. Jude's Math-a-Thon program for the past ten years – sending a total of almost $35,000 to assist in the research for finding cures for children with terminal illnesses. These programs have been in place for several years and have been very successful.

Recently, it became apparent that while we were reaching out to the parish and community as well as the broader Church in many ways, what were we doing to show our love and respect for the uniqueness of the individuals in our own school? There was an increasing request for "extra help" and tutoring for our students having special learning needs. We looked to our students for an answer and started a program entitled "Serving Other Students" (SOS). Teachers were asked to recommend students in grades 5-8 who are academically successful, but, more importantly, compassionate and caring students willing to give an hour a week, after school, to help other students. After receiving parental permission, these students were led through an in-service workshop, training them in potential tutoring practices with an emphasis on building positive relationships with students who may have academic or social deficiencies. Both parents and teachers made requests for individuals in grades K-8 who would benefit from the extra help. In some cases, the requests were made for students who were in need of reading, math, or spelling help. In other cases, students who just needed a positive peer role model were selected for the program.

After receiving parental permission, the tutees and tutors were paired up based on the specific needs of each student. Two one-hour sessions were held each week. A form was developed that allowed the classroom teacher to write out the assignment for each session (e.g., "Study spelling words from Week 10"; "Ask and orally give meanings for all words"; "Use both written and oral testing"; "Extra time: read from the social studies book,

pp. 86-90"). After the session, the tutor completed the form, indicating how the sessions went – including what material was covered and any problems or concerns that he/she observed. The forms were turned in to the office and a copy was made for our program file, and returned to the teacher.

All students in the program – both tutors and tutees – were asked to make a commitment of at least one semester. At the end of the first semester, when students were given a chance to commit for a second semester, we not only had all of our tutors return, we have several more students who asked to serve as tutors. When parents of the tutees were asked about signing their child up for the second semester, we found that all the students had requested to continue in the program, and we received additional parent requests to have their child included also.

Evaluations and constant communication between tutors, teachers, and parents were key to the success of the program. We had t-shirts made for our tutors in our school colors that had "SOS" with a drawing of a sailboat on the sea (the design was drawn by a student). Our tutors were allowed to wear these t-shirts on their tutoring days. We had periodic "SOS" meetings to discuss how they thought the program was going and any suggestions they had for the teachers. It was amazing the insight these young people had in the difficulties their tutees were experiencing and the suggestions they made. They took their responsibilities very seriously. A result of this program that had never occurred to us at the time of its development was ... we had several tutors say that they would like to grow up and become teachers some day. Future teachers in the making – what a tremendous plus!

Additionally, the motto of our "SOS" club has become a poster we place throughout the buildings of our school. It says: "Each of us is different – Expect it, Accept it, Respect it."

Forming Support for Students with Disabilities in a Catholic School

Nancy Collins
Principal
St. Anne Catholic School
Beaumont, TX

A parent called requesting a conference to discuss registering her kindergarten child in our school for the coming year. I do like to meet new families and was pleased that the family had initiated the conference. The mom came alone and her message was that her child had been in kindergarten and she felt that she was not ready yet for first grade. She was aware that some problems existed and she had begun testing. She was willing to bring her child in for a meeting, as she was most anxious to keep her in a Catholic school. Suzy (not her real name) did enter our kindergarten program that year.

Testing had been done and we were still waiting for the results as school began. Almost immediately, it was apparent that Suzy had many problems. She had to be watched constantly, as she would run out of the classroom in a flash. In addition, she had trouble relating to the teacher and the other students. We called the parents and asked for a meeting immediately. The testing had come in and the testing agency recognized that this

student had a severe problem. All were in agreement that our school was not the most appropriate placement for this child. It was a sad day for St. Anne School, for me as the principal, for the parents, and for Suzy.

How do we determine if a Catholic school can provide programs that will best benefit the nontraditional student? Whom can we serve? Can we, in fairness, open our doors to all students whose parents desire a Catholic education? Our mission statement states that we provide a quality Catholic education and develop responsible, young Christian adults with an emphasis on moral and religious values of faith, community, and service. Is this mission statement only applicable to those students who are capable of excelling academically? Are our expectations realistic that all students can be responsible Christians?

As students enter school, all parents have high expectations for their children. It is therefore often difficult for parents to accept the true reason that their child is not being successful. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we work through this process of discovery in the most compassionate Christian manner. The principal must project a positive attitude to the parents and teachers and focus on what would best benefit the student.

One way that schools can help this process of determining the most appropriate plan is by forming a school-wide student support team. The principal should consider carefully who should be on this team. If the school has a counselor, then the counselor should be involved, as well as one administrator, whether it be the principal or the assistant. Some schools have content mastery teachers or special reading teachers who should definitely be able to provide expertise. Look at your staff and consider those teachers who effectively modify their programs for students and who are successful at reaching all students who are in their classes. You may have staff members who have special education training and/or work well with other teachers. After the team is formed, the teaching staff needs to be educated as to who should be referred and the proper procedure for referral.

In determining the needs of a student, teachers can use a

pre-referral checklist that will help in considering what strategies they might try and what might work. The team will come together and listen to the strengths and the weaknesses of the student. Using the pre-referral checklist, the discussion can then focus on new strategies and a timeline for their execution. At this meeting, the team can also determine the benefit of classroom observations, who should do them, and how many might be beneficial. Another consideration at this meeting should be when to involve the parents. Should the parents be involved after new modifications and strategies are undertaken? Depending on the age of the child, when should the child be involved? These important questions should be discussed and resolved at this first meeting.

When meeting with parents, be cautious about who is involved in this meeting. You do not want parents to be overwhelmed by the sheer number of professionals present at the first meeting. The classroom teacher should definitely be present as well as one other representative of the Student Support Team. Parents may or may not be receptive to any news that may alert them to a possible serious problem. It is most important that the emphasis in any parent meeting be on what will best benefit their child and help the child to be a successful student. No mention should be made of how the child is doing compared to any other student in the class or that this child is not "like" others, or is bothering others. The focus should always be on their child. In many cases, parents already suspect that their child is different and are trying to cope with acceptance of this difference.

Once the school has made every effort to work through problems, parents will be grateful that so much time and energy has been focused on their child and the child's success. It will be easier to recommend testing if the school has made strong and thorough efforts to provide remediation. Parents are always appreciative of such a professional approach.

Teachers may become uncomfortable at the amount or types of modifications used to help a child. Testing will provide valuable information which may benefit the school in the search

for remedies that will work for a particular child. Testing may also reinforce the validity of already existing modifications and offer new insights for success.

Parents should be provided with resources for testing that can fit their own financial situations. Local education agencies must provide this testing free. There may be private agencies that have an excellent reputation in the community. Many large city hospitals also provide referral services.

After testing is complete, the results should be discussed with the classroom teacher as well as the administrator or the administrator's designee, the parents, and possibly the student. The best case scenario would be for those who conducted the testing to explain the results to the group. If this is not possible, those who conducted the testing should be available by phone for clarification of the results as necessary. Testing should always include recommendations for both the school and the family.

Can Catholic schools accommodate students with special needs? Before this question can be answered, consider the resources that your school does have and ask what else can we do? Remember what Jesus would do. He made us all unique and therefore He knows that we are all valuable in His sight. Don't rest until you have made every effort to have all students be part of a Catholic education.

POWER for Learning

Bonnie Diefendorf
Principal
Sacred Heart School
Sedalia, MO

The school experiences of the middle school years of pre-adolescents have a direct effect on their future spiritual, emotional, and academic growth. Providing the means for lower-achieving students to experience success is imperative. Sacred Heart School developed the POWER Program for this purpose.

The POWER (Providing Others With Educational Resources) Program was designed to help sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students achieve success in their regular classes. The program serves as a resource to help students develop and improve study habits and organizational skills, to strengthen areas of weakness, and to assist students in current areas of study. The POWER Program does not take the place of regular classes, but serves as a resource for students needing additional help in reaching their educational goals.

The students meet twice a week during seventh hour. The students report to POWER class fully prepared to work with current homework and an up-to-date homework schedule. The regular classroom teacher works closely with the POWER teacher, reporting daily assignments, upcoming tests and projects. Regular communication with the parents helps the students stay on

track and informs the parents of help needed with homework.

The POWER teacher prepares lessons which integrate study skills, remedial work, and current homework. The POWER teacher makes weekly (daily, if necessary) contact with the classroom teachers to keep them abreast of students' work in the classroom. A weekly POWER track form is completed by each of the students' teachers. The POWER track form is sent to the teacher each Friday and returned Monday morning. It includes daily assignments for the week as well as upcoming tests or projects. The classroom teacher also signs the students' assignment books every class period after checking to see that it is filled our completely. Late assignments are indicated.

Parents are to review the assignment books every night and have the student show them his/her completed homework. They are to have the student complete any unfinished homework, providing needed help. Parents are to make sure all finished homework is placed in the homework folder and put in the student's bookbag. The assignment book is an important communication tool between home and school. The teachers write notes in the assignment books and parents can write notes to the teachers.

Positive aspects of the program include:

- Small class size (5-6 students) allows the teacher to communicate easily with each student;
- Each student is held accountable for his/her assignments;
- The POWER teacher knows what each student needs to do to maintain an up-to-date status in each class;
- Each student gets help studying for upcoming tests or assignments in a more individualized setting;
- Each student is praised where there is progress or prodded when extra effort is needed;
- Each student has shown pride when grades have improved or when a good grade is earned on an assignment;
- The instructor knows immediately if a student needs

to have his/her attention brought back to the task;
- There is close communication among all teachers and parents.

The POWER Program has proven to be an effective means to empower students with the skills they need to succeed.

Scripture and Love

Sr. Monica Paul Fraser
Principal
Incarnation Catholic School
Sarasota, FL

At Incarnation Catholic School in Sarasota, Florida, one of our goals is to familiarize children and their parents with the riches of Sacred Scripture and through the Scriptures to learn of the depths of God's love for them. To this end, a verse of Scripture is chosen each week, printed in calligraphy, and hung in every classroom and office. I write a letter to the children each week explaining the verse. The teachers review the letter with the children and the children memorize the passage. The children are tested on the Scriptures at the end of each month. Those who know all four verses receive a certificate naming them Scripture Scholars for that month.

Another thing we do to help the children realize that they are a gift from God is to celebrate their birthdays with "We Thank God You Were Born Day." One Friday each month, tables are decorated in the lunchroom and I serve pizza, juice, and cake to the children whose birthdays occur during that month. Each child also receives a small present: a key ring, pencil, holy card, birthday button, or some other item. The other students all sing "Happy Birthday" at the appropriate time.

Both programs, the Scripture Scholars and Thank God Day are part of an overall goal to help the children deepen their

awareness of God's love for them and the fact that they are lovable.

Share A Little Bit Of Your Love Day: a Service Learning Experience

Pamela W. Fulham
Principal
St. Pius X School
New Orleans, LA

Acknowledging that God is the center of all being, St. Pius X School is dedicated to a philosophy that is rich in Catholic beliefs and values. In cooperation with parents, the school strives to instill in students strong religious, moral, and social values for living by fostering a love of God and neighbor, a love of learning, a respect for virtue, the ability to think constructively, to reason independently, to accept responsibility, and *to recognize the needs of others through Christian service.*

In 1996, a service learning program, the Builders Club, was initiated at the school in order to offer opportunities to students of middle school age to make a personal contribution to their school, community, and peers. Its goal was to develop leadership qualities in young people through experiences in volunteer community service.

The St. Pius X School Builders Club consists mainly of the school's eighth graders under the guidance of the eighth grade

teacher. Since its inception in 1996, projects have included: shopping for groceries and preparing meals at the Ronald McDonald House; sending cards to and telephoning the elderly; holding fund-raisers for Covenant House; hosting Christmas and Easter parties at Kingsley House; and collecting more than 1,000 pounds of Mardi Gras beads for STRIVE, an organization that provides funding for disabled children. The beads are sold to Mardi Gras organizations to provide funds for the children. The Builders Club also participated in various projects to assist the needy by collecting clothes and food for the St. Vincent de Paul Society; the Louisiana State University Medical School Child Outpatient Clinic; "Ice Breakers for Breath," the Ice Skate-a-Thon sponsored by the American Lung Association of Louisiana; "Pennies for Patients," benefiting the Leukemia Society of America; and the world missions sponsored by the Holy Childhood Association.

This past school year, 2000-2001, the eighth grade Builders Club planned an all-day activity in which the entire student body learned through a variety of curricula how to interact with the elderly. *Share a Little Bit of Your Love Day* was held during the week of Valentine's Day. Twenty-five senior citizens from the neighborhood Lakeview Shepherd Center were invited to spend the day at the school. Two months before the event the eighth graders devised projects for each grade level. During computer classes, students made invitations. In art classes, they made welcome banners, place cards for the tables, and table arrangements. Students shopped for decorations and artfully created gift bags filled with toiletries. Each grade level was also assigned a "hands-on" activity to present to the elderly during the day: Pre-K students made Valentine necklaces, kindergartners sang songs, first and second graders read stories, the third grade choir entertained during lunch, the fourth-graders conducted interviews, the fifth-graders played Jeopardy, the sixth grade speech and drama class acted out a Valentine skit and prepared Valentine cards, the seventh grade math class held a bingo, and the eighth grade and their parents prepared the lunch and dessert. As a follow-up activity, all Language Arts classes wrote letters

to all the elderly who participated in *Share a Little Bit of Your Love Day.*

By participating in the Builders Club service learning activity, *Share a Little Bit of Your Love Day,* the entire student body experienced the thrill of accomplishment and the satisfaction of knowing their efforts made a difference for those they helped. The students took positive, constructive action *to recognize the needs of others through Christian service.*

The St. Pius X Builders Club has been recognized by the Kiwanis International, a social and civic organization, and the New Orleans Brown Foundation for their outstanding service to the community. It has received the "Most Outstanding Community Service Award" for Orleans Parish.

ENCORE!!!!

Nancy L. Genzel
Principal
Resurrection Catholic School
Lakeland, FL

An **ENCORE** is a call for a repeat performance. This word aptly describes our popular middle school elective program, which attempts to provide experiences for the young adolescent outside the traditional academic curriculum and after school co-curricular programs. The two-year-old **ENCORE** program grew out of research on the characteristics of a successful middle school, our own unique situation, and our commitment to ". . . empower our children to integrate Jesus' values and teachings into their lives" and "to create an environment which stimulates the students to achieve academic excellence and prepares them to serve others."

Background

Resurrection Catholic School used the "grow your own" model in establishing a PreK-8 parish school in the Diocese of Orlando, Florida. The "grow your own" model (a phrase used by our pastor) intended to add one grade each year to the long established preschool program. After two years, however, the parish found it necessary to open a second section of each grade. The 2001-2002 school year will see the completion of this model

with 540 students enrolled in five preschool classes and two sections of each grade, K-8.

Using the one-grade-at-a-time approach allowed for the construction of the school over a ten year period and provided financial breathing space for a parish that was also building a church and purchasing property for new church offices. This growth plan generated unique problems for the middle school program, however. Every year for five years the middle school schedule and room assignments had to be altered. The configuration of the middle school changed from a team of two teachers for fifty students in Grades 5-6 in 1996 to a team of eight teachers and 110 students in Grades 6-8 by 2001. The middle school moved three times, with a fourth and final move scheduled for October 2001. Teaching assignments changed every year as grades and sections were added.

Objectives

All of this change, however, did not exempt us from meeting the needs of our young people and remaining true to our mission. The **ENCORE** elective program emerged from the space, personnel, and money available to meet those needs.

The objectives of the **ENCORE** program are:

- To provide opportunities to serve others
- To expand and enrich the traditional academic curriculum
- To encourage students to discover hidden talents
- To provide extended periods of time for learning a new skill
- To give the "gifts of time and attention" to the struggling student
- To enhance positive social skills by providing a small (10-12 students) learning environment
- To foster interest in lifelong skills, careers, or hobbies.

Organization

Students in Grade Six traditionally experience an adjustment period upon entering middle school. Keeping this in mind, the elective program for Grade Six is distinctly different from that of our seventh and eighth graders. The sixth graders are scheduled two periods per week to a study skills class during the first quarter. The curriculum was created with input from the middle school team, purchased study skills materials, and an analysis of how to academically "survive" Resurrection Catholic School. A health class is offered during the second quarter, with art and music offered during the third and fourth quarters. In addition, the students are required to participate in two physical education classes and one Spanish class per week all year long. The class size is 25 and the students attend class with those assigned to the same homeroom. Beginner and advanced band are available to students for a fee. This program is offered either after school or during the last fifteen minutes of the student's last period class twice a week.

Upon entering seventh and eighth grade the students are allowed to choose their electives. Eight electives are offered each quarter. Students rank order their choice of electives at the end of the school year and the school administration attempts to honor their requests for fall. The class is made up of 10-12 seventh and eighth graders and meets three periods a week during the last period of the day. Over the last two years the elective choices have included: aerobics, tennis, art, jazz recorder, stocks, technology, web site design, newspaper publishing, creative writing, speech, service to others, bowling, make-and-take, and PAL (personal assisted learning for students needing academic assistance). In addition to **ENCORE**, the students are required to participate in two physical education classes and two Spanish classes per week. The physical education and Spanish classes enroll 25 same-grade students. The Band Program, available for sixth grade, is also available to the older students.

Personnel

Oftentimes, personnel availability drives a program. By increasing the teaching time of our part-time special subject area teachers, we were able to increase the elective offerings and keep personnel costs at a minimum. A fringe benefit of this program is the common planning period that became available for the members of the middle school team. Teachers of electives are required to submit a course outline at the beginning of the school year. The course is repeated four times during the school year with new students enrolled each quarter. The **ENCORE** teachers appreciate this consideration of personal planning time.

Facilities and Resources

We currently offer more courses than we have available classroom space. To solve this problem we utilize the library, lunchroom, and after-care room and travel offsite (tennis takes place at a city-owned park only five minutes away). The students enjoy getting off-campus and the small class size allows us to use the parish van for transportation. When scheduling classes, we identified some areas for consideration:

- Some electives need Internet access; the number of computers in a room limits the size of the class
- Some activities are better without traditional desk
- Teachers like to work in their own classrooms
- A fee may need to be charged for a few electives, e.g., band, bowling, make-and-take
- Service learning could require fund-raising activities and parent involvement
- Study skills, Spanish, and health will require an expenditure for textbooks/resources
- Scheduling electives during the last period of the day eliminates the issue of students being late (due to traveling, cleanup, etc.) for the next class period.

After only a few years, our elective program remains

popular with students, faculty, and parents. Discipline problems in special subject areas have virtually disappeared. Camaraderie between the grades is increasing. The students' talents appear to be developing at an advanced level and students look forward to learning at the end of the school day.

Challenging Students to Read

Anthony Grasso
Principal
Precious Blood School
Los Angeles, CA

Principals face many challenges on a daily basis: keeping good teachers, school finances, or the school plant to name a few. But how do you raise enthusiasm among the students for an academic project? When I came to Precious Blood School, curriculum materials were very limited. Beyond the textbooks, classroom libraries were non-existent (it must be noted that our school is so small, it cannot accommodate a library). After bringing in book fairs to the school, we were able to use the profits from these fairs to build up individual classroom libraries. We strongly believe that reading is the key to all learning. But motivating the students to read required a special project.

At a faculty meeting at the beginning of the 1998-1999 school year, my teachers and I developed a reading challenge. We set a goal of 8,000 books as being realistic. But the motivation would come from me. Would I be willing to kiss a pig, be tied up and have ketchup and mustard squirted on me, or be the target in a dunk tank? As much as the students would have loved any or all of the previous challenges, I settled the issue by

deciding that I would spend the school day on the roof. Well, that was met with cheers. The faculty began to plan my roof day. What a day that turned out to be!

We kept track of the books by giving students book slips to fill out. The slip asked for the title, author, illustrator, and a one-sentence statement about the book. These slips were placed in a plastic cylinder making it look like a bright rainbow. Each class was responsible for keeping the count. Parents who read books to their children would earn a book slip. We targeted late April as the deadline and my ascent to the roof in May.

The day began with my ascent to the roof. Opening assembly was moved to the front lawn to witness the ascent. Comfortable chairs, a cellular phone, and a variety of snacks had been provided through a bucket tied with a rope. During the day, each class came out to the lawn and sang, read, or drew me on the roof. Cards of congratulations were sent up in the bucket. A parent flew his airplane over the school, dipping his wings towards the school. My diocesan supervisor came to visit, sending up a snack and a form that needed completion! The local newspapers came to cover the event. At the end of the day, we lined up at assembly for dismissal, and I thanked the students for meeting their goal. More importantly, students were reading more and parents were reading more to their children. Teachers read to their students.

The results of this day have lasted for years. Students have become aware of different children's authors. In our Halloween Parade, some students chose to dress as story characters. Some of our students read to other students. When the movie version of a book is released, our students favor the book. Reading has become fun at our school, and students are anxious for the next book fair. Students have been asking for the next reading challenge, ready to put me on the roof again. Every year we set the number of books to read higher. It is not impossible for a student body of 230 to read 10,000 books during the school year. Students have been rewarded with a picnic at the end of the school year.

Well, for the coming 2001-2002 school year, the situation

seems ready for another daring challenge. Let's hope that this year's faculty meeting yields a challenging goal.

Saints' Families

Debra Haney
Principal
John Paul II Catholic School
Houston, TX

The "Saints Families" were introduced at John Paul II Catholic School during the 1999-2000 school year. We had 52 eighth graders, so we created 50 "Saints Families." Saints Families are made up of at least one student from each grade level. Due to increased enrollment, there are some Saints Families with more than one student at each grade level.

Each "family" consists of one eighth-grader, one seventh-grader and so on until we came to kindergarten. We did not include four-year-olds as they were just becoming familiar with the school and thought it would be overwhelming for them. The eighth grade student is in charge of the family. An assigned teacher is in the room, but they are to let the eighth grader lead the family and only help if asked or common sense tells the teacher the eighth grader needs help. The teacher was asked not to intervene unless help was needed with discipline or the project really needed clearer instruction. The teacher is required to be in the room with her two families.

The Saints Families stay the same for two or three years. When a complete new listing of Saints Families is done, we make sure that no siblings are in the same family. The new families should consist of students that were not together in previous years.

One of the purposes of Saints Families is to provide leadership opportunities for our eighth-graders among the student body. We attempted to put students who were strong leaders with students who needed modeling of strong leadership skills. The main intention when we started Saint Families was to build our "family" community by having an opportunity for students to get to know students in other grade levels. This socialization has been evidenced by watching the children in the upper grades greet the younger students in the hallways or at outside school activities. The little ones are so proud to know the older kids and often tell their teacher, parents, or peers, "That is my Saint Family leader and his name is John!" Students, especially the eighth grade students, practiced the skill of "how to introduce" before meeting with their families. Then, at their very first meeting, each child introduced themselves to the group before starting their activity.

We meet with our "Saints Families" approximately once every six weeks. Eighth-grade students pick up their youngest members, kindergarten and first grade, when the time is announced over the PA system. After the halls are cleared, another announcement over the PA allows the other students to walk to their family meeting room (Kindergarten and first-grade students wore nametags for at least the first three meetings.).

Students meet for approximately 30-45 minutes depending upon the project. Family sessions begin and end with a prayer. Each time we meet there is some activity that is planned for the group to do and it always has a Christian purpose, whether it be prayer, service, or learning more about their faith and how to live it. At the first meeting of the year, pictures are taken of each family to be displayed with their first project. The first project was to make Rosaries for each student. The eighth grade students were given instructions and samples and even practiced how to teach and help the youngest.

Occasionally the students sit together as "Saints Families" for Mass. One time they ate lunch together, but that proved rather difficult for the eighth graders.

This year, each family was given a "patron saint." During their first meeting they discussed their "saint" and made posters to share. The posters were hung up in some of the classrooms and brought to Mass.

Activities for 2001 include:

- Posters
- Rosaries (blessed at Mass and kept in homeroom or religion class to use during the year - sent home in May)
- Advent Wreaths (sent home)
- Scapulars (sent home after blessed Lenten Crosses)
- Alleluia Banners and parade (bury the Alleluia on Mardi Gras)
- Litany of the saints sung and "Lenten" quiet observed after parade
- Collected for Seafarers service project; "families" decorated the boxes to be distributed
- Brought flowers for Mary, during May crowning sat together as "families"
- Last "family" meeting will be without the 8th grade leader, the day after graduation. Students will make cards for their graduating leader and the 7th grade student in the group takes over as the leader.

Again, using the PA system, when the time is completed, the eighth grade student takes the kindergarten and 1st grade students back to their classrooms. When the hallway is clear, the rest of the family members are dismissed (over the PA) to return to their classrooms.

Eighth Graders Become Thinkers and Innovators Through Technology

Rosemary Henry-Burrough
Principal
St. Rita Catholic School
Fort Worth, TX

Preparing children for adulthood by inculcating the skills that enable them to think and to be creative is part of the philosophy and mission of St. Rita Catholic School. Consistent with our mission, the computer teacher presented eighth-grader students in a computer application class with a technological challenge as their final project. Our school had received computer hardware, approximately three to five years old, to be integrated in the school as a whole. This equipment contained a mixed assortment of RAM and hard drives. The students were to break down the computers and distribute RAM equally among them. They also installed additional hardware where needed and where compatible. Student technicians then proceeded to deliver and set up computer stations in each classroom and checked to make sure the stations were operating. They then installed software for appropriate grade levels and teacher needs, instructing classroom teachers on how to access and review software

The computer teacher created a final project that stimulated interest and useful skill development for students. The students not only learned the component parts of a computer, how to configure hard drives, and how to install software, but, of equal importance, how to become both a student learner and a student teacher. As a result, students gained career awareness and determined possible future career interests. In addition, students came to realize the importance of follow through and completion of tasks in an effort to support and assist teachers in the classroom. It reinforced the notion that thinking skills and innovation are important components of technology.

Framing Social Service Programs During the School Year

Sr. Judith Kenaan, CSJ
Principal
St. Raphael School
Pittsburgh, PA

With the Catholic Church so heavily invested in social concerns, our school, St. Raphael School in Pittsburgh, PA, naturally wants to guide the children in that same direction. Our Mission Statement: "... to gently challenge the children to become hope-filled, competent and contributing members of a Christ-centered society," provided me with the support of the faculty and parents alike.

To keep the spirit for the program vibrant, I have found it worthwhile to create the time and space for social service projects within the time frame of a school year. The following is a skit I used at the very beginning of the program. It was meant to touch the children's hearts, challenge them with questions and discussions, and empower them for action inside and outside the classroom befitting their age groups.

The skit, talk and ritual were used twice, for children in Grades 1-4 and 5-8. The setting for the lesson was a carpeted room that provided natural light and beauty. Half of the school

assembled, and was seated on the rug. Room was made for an aisle in the center and between the rows of children. An area was taped off in the front of the room for the "stage area."

Skit: four older students dress as clowns wearing one half of a large red heart on their backs. They enter the room silently, going to four different sections of the room and immediately begin to interact with the children.

> Clown 1: Brushes off the shoes of the children.
>
> Clown 2: Carries an outlandish hat and mirror and convinces the children to try on the hat and enjoy the image of themselves.
>
> Clown 3: Juggles three balls and encourages the children to try.
>
> Clown 4: Performs a simple magic trick that the children can figure out immediately.

Enter the Christ figure. He is wearing a T-shirt with a heart symbol and carries a flashlight and a plastic globe under his arm. His stride is one of self-assurance as he approaches each clown; one by one he makes the sign of the cross over them with the flashlight. When all four are blessed and taken to the stage area, the children will see the broken hearts on their backs joined. The clowns see this too and wordlessly rejoice.

The Christ figure positions the clowns to represent the four directions (North, South, East, West). He centers himself in the circle and focuses all his attention on the plastic globe. He tosses it playfully over his head, enfolds it in his arms, hums to it, etc. After some deliberation, he entrusts this globe to the clowns. At this time he turns on the flashlight and follows the globe while it is carefully tossed to each clown. After a brief period of time the clowns become silly and refuse to heed the silent warnings of the Christ figure. The globe drops!

The first words are spoken by the Christ figure, "Oh no,

my people!" At this time the clowns freeze. The Christ figure bends down and gently picks up the globe, draws it to himself, rocks it, etc. In his final gesture he elevates the globe with reverence and power as far above his head as he can reach. The clowns kneel down with their backs toward the audience allowing the heart pieces to be joined again. The Christ figure once again hands the world over to the clowns. He also selects someone from the audience to hold the flashlight. He bows to the audience and exits.

The approximate length of the skit is ten minutes. The adult leader begins to draw the skit's message from the children. This should be done in the same enthusiastic spirit as the performance. Then the leader should incorporate his/her story of service, including joys as well as hardships. After this, the leader asks, "Who are the hurting people in our world today?" and "How can we make a difference?" The leader should expect much student participation around these questions. When bringing this to a close, the leader should congratulate the children on their insights and let them clap for themselves. Then the leader should say something like the following, or have the Christ figure reenter and say, "I'm here today looking for people like you to help lift up the hurting people of this world. In the silence of your heart will you consider making a resolution to put forth some time and effort in order to make a difference in the world today?"

This discussion is then followed by a brief ritual which should deepen and personalize the message of the mission/service.

Ritual: the four clowns set up two stations in the front of the room. At each station one clown holds a globe with the flashlight shining on it as well as outward toward the children. The other clown holds a dish of Holy Water. They stand side by side. The children are directed to proceed single file up to the clown who is holding the globe and flashlight. The light will fall on them and the world. They are to lay their hand on the top of the globe and then proceed over to the clown with the Holy Water, make the Sign of the Cross on themselves and return to

their classroom in silence. Appropriate background music should accompany this activity. Once in their classrooms they complete the following activity on a sheet of art paper.

Draw yourself in your favorite place with the Light of Christ shining on you. On the back of the paper answer the questions: "What if Jesus Christ asked you to shine your light on the homeless this year, what would that be like for you?" and "How could this class do that?"

Different classes have named different groups, such as service to the hungry, sick, etc. The teacher should allow at least fifteen minutes for the completion of these activities. She will then engage the children in a brainstorming session to formulate several activities that the class can reasonably accomplish during the year. These activities include reading on this issue, praying regularly for the people, and reaching out to them on at least two occasions. It was recommended that the teacher keep a photo journal of these activities to be displayed during Catholic School Week.

After this initial phase, the classroom teacher handled the middle phases of the service projects with their classes. When the projects were completed, time was spent with the students discussing what the service meant to them, how it reflected what Jesus asked them to do, and how those helped responded to the service, even if this had to be imagined.

The final phase of this program has been done in various ways. Children share the stories of the efforts informally with other grade levels. Specific students might be selected to share briefly their "Witness" talks before and after school liturgies. In addition, beginning the following school year with several grades recreating their social service activities in skits, with plenty of down-to-earth humor, is a great way to set the pace all over again. I have found that the children grow confident in becoming members of the Church and the broader community while bringing joy to themselves and others.

Breaking Down the Walls: Meeting the Special Needs of Students in Catholic Schools

Janet M. Klosinski
Curriculum and Personnel Director
Wausau Area Catholic Schools
Wausau, WI

The Wausau Area Catholic Schools (WACS) is a nine-parish consortium consisting of seven Catholic schools in the community of Wausau, Wisconsin. Our mission is to provide excellence in education in a Catholic environment and enhance the personal and spiritual growth of our students to meet life's challenges. WACS is committed to a personal approach in helping students, and as a Catholic community, is committed to teach as Jesus did.

As an administrator in our unification, it didn't take long to realize that some of our students had special needs beyond our "regular" educational program. Teachers were seeing a variety of needs in their classrooms including varying degrees of learning disabilities, English as a second language, dyslexia, Asbergers syndrome or mild autism, Attention Deficit Disorder, hyperactivity, hearing and visual impairments, and anxiety and behavior disorders, to name a few. Some of our students were able to receive additional services through our local public schools,

but in many cases, the needs of these children were not deemed a "significant weakness" based on the regulations and guidelines that public school officials had to use. Therefore, our students were ineligible to receive additional services. To us the need was great, yet teachers, administrators and even parents felt helpless and didn't know what to do next.

The process of going from frustration to breaking down the walls to meeting the special needs of students did not occur overnight. We slowly began a transformation, which resulted in more students receiving the kind of instruction they needed while staying within the walls of a Catholic school.

How did Wausau Area Catholic Schools get started? We began by accessing our current practices. We identified which students needed additional help, support and/or services, and identified what practices the teachers were already doing. Some of our teachers were already incorporating strategies to help these students and were seeing success. Learning what everyone was doing helped to educate all staff members and limit their frustration. We also identified the attitudes of the teachers in our buildings. It was important in our mission of breaking down the walls to have all members of our team own the mission. Some teachers we found were afraid of what other students (those who did not have special needs) would say or feel when they found out that a particular student might only have to write one structurally sound paragraph instead of writing the entire essay as originally assigned. Our response to this was using this as a teachable moment about a key belief in our faith. God made each of us special; each us has our unique strengths and challenges. Not all of us learn in the same way at the same time. We also learned to point out that as a Catholic school, as much as we hate to admit it, we were a bit behind the times. Inclusionary practices have been in American public schools for at least a generation. Wausau Area Catholic Schools was just now catching up. We also considered attitudes of other administrators in our unification, and the attitudes of pastors, the diocesan superintendent and the bishop. Their support of special needs would be important for future growth and success.

Coincidentally, at about the same time, our diocesan bishop, Bishop Raymond Burke, had established a policy mandating that all children and parents who wish to have a Catholic education should be given that opportunity. If a child has special needs, the Catholic school should work to meet those needs if at all possible. Our bishop realized that many special needs students were actually denied a Catholic education because the school may have had a practice of not accepting any special needs students. Catholic schools in our diocese needed to break down the walls and see if there was a way to help these students. It was also communicated to our Catholic schools that yes, there are some needs that our schools may not be equipped to meet, but each special need decision should be dealt with on an individual basis. The superintendent of our diocese, Donald Novotney, supported the bishop's directive by offering in-services to all Catholic schoolteachers regarding the directive and provided help to get our schools started. The diocese hired a part-time special needs consultant, Diane Hietpas, so that each school had a resource person to go to for direction and help.

At the building level, we began addressing attitudes of staff and educating them regarding methods for modifications which teachers could do in the context of their "regular" teaching. Many of the modifications were very simple, such as providing students a copy of the notes for the class if transferring from a board was a concern, or allowing extra time to take a test if reading speed was the concern. It was exciting to see teachers realize that many of the strategies and methods for addressing special needs are good for all students. For some of the staff they realized that they do not need to always do extra things that they may simply need to change the way they are teaching. When we ran into attitudes that were resistant, those of us who had embraced special needs education were able to remind fellow colleagues that our mission was to teach as Jesus did. Jesus was the first true special-needs teacher. As the Gospels recount, he ministered to those who were crippled, blind, lame, and those who struggled with mental defects.

Our consortium became actively involved in developing

an Individualized Service Plan (ISP), using guidelines from our diocesan office for Catholic schools and sources from our local districts. We began writing formalized ISPs for students who were diagnosed with specific needs and as teams of building level personnel, planned modifications, methods of assessment, and a system of communication to parents and student. The building level team met with parents and shared the plan with them and sought their approval. Parents generally were very grateful that the school was going the extra mile for their child. The conference was a great opportunity to build a partnership with the parent. No ISP would be implemented without parental approval. The ISP also contained components which outlined parental responsibilities. For example, it may have been written into the plan for the parent to seek additional outside testing. Once a plan was in place, it became an expectation, not just a "suggestion," that all teachers who had that child implement the plan accordingly. The building administrator ensured that all staff were implementing the plan and worked with the staff to clarify any questions or concerns teachers had.

Key to our success with inclusion was the development of a team approach to working with special needs students. In our buildings, a team of teachers from across the grade levels and/or disciplines, along with the Learning Resource teacher, school counselor and principal was formed. Since, not all of our schools had additional personnel, such as a Learning Resource teacher or school counselor, team structure varied slightly by building. The team discussed student strengths and challenges. We never used the word weaknesses because of the negativity associated with that term. We focused on challenges and agreed that all of us have some kind of challenges. The team then made recommendations for modifications based on all of the data and information pertaining to the student. Regular meetings were held to discuss student progress, monitor implementation of any existing ISPs, and address questions and answers, and provide support for teachers helped to keep special needs in the forefront. The team approach emphasized that team includes those beyond the personnel located at each building. The special needs

team consisted of colleagues in our local public districts as well as community members who had various fields of expertise. Each school made a commitment to seeking out any community resources that might be available to Catholic schools and to obtain the necessary resource books or materials to help support teachers.

We know our work has just begun, and that with every special needs student, we learn more about how to help children and their families. The more we learn, the more confident we are becoming as educators. With our increased confidence, comes a decrease in frustration. We are beginning to see student success and that is the reason all of us are working in a Catholic school setting. Our advice to breaking down the walls and meeting the special needs of students is not to give up, talk among colleagues at every opportunity, find out what works and what doesn't, ask a lot of questions, borrow any tool or strategy that comes your way, and pray frequently. As the Wausau Area Catholic Schools are becoming more adept at working with special needs students, we are finding that we are also becoming better at identifying special needs students. The numbers keep growing, which brings us back to our mission and the realization that God did indeed make all students special.

The All-Day Kindergarten Program

Evelyn M. Nordberg
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St. Timothy School
San Mateo, CA

St. Timothy is a multicultural Catholic elementary school in San Mateo, California, dedicated to the principles of Christian community, the education of the whole child, and the acknowledgement of the parent as the primary educator. We work with the family to develop the spiritual, academic, psychological, social, and physical wellbeing of each child. We promote an appreciation of the visual and performing arts and encourage self-expression. We offer a challenging academic curriculum and place special emphasis on teaching the Catholic values and developmental skills necessary to become productive, contributing citizens in a technological society. We expect active participation from all members of our school family and we encourage Christian service to the larger community. We strive to instill a sense of pride in who we are as children of God, respect for people of all cultures, and a concern for the needs of the world.

Thirteen years ago, in 1989, our Kindergarten was like any other, a half-day program. Most of the children, with both parents working, spent half of the day (either morning or afternoon) in the Kindergarten classroom, and the other half of the

day in our Extended Day Care facility. The children had to make a transition every day at midday to a different environment with a different adult supervising them. Parents were paying tuition for their child's enrollment in Kindergarten and had the additional expense of daycare. The Kindergarten teacher was repeating all morning activities a second time for the afternoon students. Many children came to our school with two years of preschool experience behind them, and had the need to be challenged.

The pastor and I made a joint decision to investigate the possibility of beginning an All–Day Program. I surveyed our school families in Kindergarten through Grade Three to see if there would be enough interest to implement this change. Eighty-seven percent of the parents who returned surveys were in favor of piloting such a program. Our school board also provided positive support for the concept. The Kindergarten teacher and I spent a full day at another Catholic school in our archdiocese that had already implemented a successful All-Day program. We were quite impressed with our visit, and, with pastoral and parental support, began the task of planning the curriculum with a projected start date of September 1990.

Since its inception, we have consistently evaluated the program, including the progress of the students as well as the overall curriculum. This new schedule eliminated the midday transition and opened the door to many benefits for the children and the classroom teacher. At first, some parents expressed concern about the long day and the inability for their children to nap in the afternoon. The majority of the students in our program have attended pre-school and are accustomed to the longer day. Most of the children do not require a nap at age five, and those who appear tired on any given day are permitted to "catch up on their sleep" in our clinic. It didn't take much time for the parents to realize that it would be much easier on their children if they were in one environment for the entire day with a full-time teacher and a full-time instructional aide. There have been fewer tears and less separation anxiety at the beginning of the school year, and the parents pay the same tuition as all other

grades, making it more affordable than the previous half-day program.

The current All-Day Kindergarten Program allows the teacher to plan activities throughout the day, taking into consideration the children's level of attention and stamina. All students benefit from having solid academic instruction that requires greater attentiveness, in the morning, and more hands-on activities in the afternoon when they begin to feel tired. The Kindergarten curriculum was expanded to include a Spanish class twice a week, physical education two times per week, general music (in addition to daily music with their own teacher), and a ninety-minute computer education block. The children go to the computer lab in small groups of twelve. This enables the teacher to divide the class into three groups, allowing for group instruction in the classroom while one group is at the computer lab. The longer day also provides time for the teacher and aide to give more individualized instruction to children who may need extra help in some areas of learning.

The teacher is also able to plan more involved art projects, science experiments, field trips, and interactive playtime. Students can go to our school library once a week in small groups and can participate in all school activities, liturgies, our Hot Lunch Program, and special assemblies. The full day also permits time for activities with "buddies" from other grades during the various liturgical seasons of the year.

Social interaction is an additional benefit of the All-Day Kindergarten Program, as students have morning, lunch, and afternoon recesses in which to interact with their peers. They spend more time with the older children and the entire school staff, and feel a greater sense of belonging to our school community.

The teacher enjoys being able to plan a variety of activities for the students and having the extra time to do them. The parents are happy that their children are in one nurturing environment for most of the day, and they are pleased with the multitude of activities that are a part of the Kindergarten curriculum. As a result of participating in this program, the children

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are transitioning more easily to the first grade. They are much better prepared, both academically and socially. When attending Mass, they participate more fully in singing and reciting responses. They are more confident and comfortable with their surroundings as well as their interactions with the older students.

Now in its twelfth year, the program continues to be one of two All-Day Kindergarten programs in our county, and consistently attracts families from outside the parish boundaries. The annual waiting list is evidence of its success, as are our precious Kindergarten graduates.

Making Changes: A Middle School Schedule in Progress

Marie Rinaudo
Principal
St. John Berchmans Cathedral School
Shreveport, LA

How to move toward the new century and meet the needs of the new student while still maintaining the traditions and culture of our K-8 parochial school? This question has concerned our St. John Berchmans Cathedral School staff for a number of years, particularly for our middle school. It is the question that prompted us to work as a team to develop a curriculum that gives our students innovative learning opportunities. With the opening the Fall 2000 term, we have taken a major step forward. Both the middle school teachers and the students have claimed a sense of ownership for a transitional curriculum and schedule.

To appreciate our decision for this year's program, it helps to take a look at our early experience. About four years ago, we began to experiment with ideas and reforms that we hoped would prepare and motivate our students and still meet with the requests of our parents for a structured program. Our initial step began with an activity period for the middle school.

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This period occurred once a week for forty minutes. Students had an opportunity to elect one of several courses: art, choir, creative writing, computers, science and library.

One advantage of this curriculum was the multi-age experience, as the sixth, seventh, and eighth graders were allowed to select the same courses. However, the disadvantages were greater. Teachers felt they had to develop a new curriculum for each course. They also had difficulty adjusting to the sixth graders being in the same class with the seventh and eighth graders. The students regarded the period as an extra-curricular subject since there were few academic requirements to be met; and the one-day-a week course was erratic as it was the first to be dropped when an unexpected change in the schedule occurred.

The next year we tried an exploratory-advisory program, with the leadership of one of our Notre Dame ACE teachers, who had been trained to facilitate the course. Indeed, the class had merit: the students were able to share their talents and special interests with others; they had the experience of the advisory sessions with their homeroom teacher; they learned leadership skills and responsibility. However, though the teachers enjoyed the laboratory style of the class, they expressed concern about the loss of academic time to what they regarded as a counseling and guidance activity.

In spite of the concerns about these trial runs, we learned one point of major importance: students, teachers, and parents liked and responded to an innovative curriculum and schedule. We were willing and eager to make adjustments as needed.

The initial programs served us well as the groundwork for our present middle school schedule. We now have quarterly courses that meet at the fourth period each day. These courses both satisfy the state of Louisiana curriculum requirements for electives for middle schools and they also enhance our school mission statement for a strong academic program. The size of our middle school makes the schedule possible with five teachers: three middle school teachers in addition to the music and the art teachers working as a team. In each nine-week period, the students are assigned by grade level to one of these classes:

reading, geography, creative writing, and fine arts. Thus, during the year, students have the opportunity to take four mini- courses all designed to extend and be integrated with the core curriculum.

A brief description of the curriculum indicates the academic quality of each of these courses and the active learning experiences afforded students.

The reading class addresses not only literature, but also drama, speech, and library and research skills. Students are required to complete two book reports and to present three speech activities during the quarter. The *Accelerated Reader* is also a component of this class. Computer software addresses basic and advanced writing skills and allows students ample practice time. As an enrichment to the oral language experiences gained in the classroom, the students also attended one school or community dramatic performance.

The geography classes enhance and support each of the mandated social studies curricula. Sixth graders concentrate on world geography and map skills, seventh graders take American geography, and eighth graders take one quarter of Louisiana geography and one quarter in Asian geography. Students attend at least one field trip in the local area to view waterways and land formations. A research paper using the Internet and related software is required. Students have access to the library and the computer lab during the period.

The creative writing class gives the students the opportunity to publish the school newspaper, the yearbook, and the literary journal. They have daily use of the computer lab for their writing. Those entering literary writing contests may also work on their entries during this period. Other writing assignments are correlated with the reading, social studies, science and religion classes. At least one field trip is made to a local newspaper company or television station to gain an appreciation for the work of professional writers.

The fine arts class allows the students to participate in music, art and drama activities. The music and art teachers team by alternating days to lead the class. The emphasis here is on preparations for art festivals, school and parish liturgies, com-

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munity performances, and school productions and events such as the Christmas play, the talent show, Catholic Schools Week, .and the eighth grade play and graduation. Correlation with other classes is a major emphasis. The course is integrated with religion and creative writing, as students write the script and dramatize the gospel for at least two of the weekly Masses during the nine weeks. Correlation with geography and Spanish is made for a multi-cultural program. Students take one field trip to a local museum or art gallery or attend one community musical performance.

The transitional quality of the program has been a major advantage for our school community. One of the benefits is the flexibility in the schedule to address the individual needs of the students—both the advanced and the challenged. The teacher of the gifted students teams with the middle school teachers to facilitate independent and small group projects and to correlate assignments. The resource teacher has time to work with those students having difficulty in the basic skills. Another merit is the transition the schedule allows our students to make. The sixth graders gradually adjust to a middle school schedule and our seventh and eighth graders prepare for the block schedule in the local high schools. The teachers enjoy the transition time as they learn to team and refine new strategies.

We are confident that we have a start for a curriculum and schedule for the new century. This approach has some of the elements of the exploratory program, but with greater emphasis on the academics. Our students engage in hands-on, laboratory activities that promote the application of basic literacy skills but also satisfies their need to be creative and to pursue personal interests and talents. Technology is fully integrated into the basic curriculum as students complete projects and interdisciplinary assignments. Creative thinking, problem solving, decision making, team work—all skills that are needed today and in the future—are integral to the curriculum.

Because student motivation is high, there are fewer discipline problems than with a totally traditional schedule. Students enjoy and value the opportunities to step out of the struc-

tured system that forms the rest of their day. They are able to see learning as exchanging ideas, negotiating, and collaboration; they appreciate the links to the real world and life experiences.

Teachers, too, now that they have the setting to work together, feel more comfortable about modifying some of their strategies. The schedule is the vehicle for helping them make the transition to performance-based learning, and thematic and integrated units. Cross-disciplinary instruction and activity-oriented classrooms are easier to accomplish. With the staff training that has occurred, they have gained an appreciation for the importance of active learning, for working as teams to integrate the disciplines, and for addressing learning styles. They themselves have become involved as active learners as they execute the plans. At least two times after school during the nine weeks, they meet to plot their course for the next quarter and to review or revise plans for projected integrated and thematic units. In addition to the staff meetings, the teachers also attend at least one workshop on integrated curriculum during the school year.

To keep parents informed, we have extended our communication beyond the weekly folder. We plan to invite parents to an evening event in the spring to see the students' progress and productions—artwork, skits, visual projects, and writing samples. This event, we hope, will give our parents a better understanding of the various approaches used by the teachers and of the ways their children's learning experiences are changing.

With a belief that a willing faculty and gradual incremental changes in the curriculum will lead to the type of program suited for the twenty-first century, St. John Berchmans School looks forward to the future. We have a curriculum that has possibilities for ongoing changes and improvement.

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Veterans Day and How We Celebrate It

Barbara C. Sawyer
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The faculty of St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin School, in the community of Whitehall, a suburb of the city of Pittsburgh, decided to continue a practice that I had initiated previously as principal of Duquesne Catholic School. This was the yearly celebration of Veterans' Day to honor our local veterans. Since this tradition continued under the current principal of Duquesne Catholic with much community support, the faculty at St. Gabriel School was eager to explore its possibilities. Moreover, our Middle States evaluation proposal dealt with reaffirming our Catholic identity through service to the community and this project seemed to meet with everyone's enthusiasm and approval.

To increase awareness of the vital role veterans have played in our nation's history, appropriate grade level activities were designed. The primary grades participated in a poster contest using the theme "Veterans Deserve Our Thanks and Praise." Intermediate grade students wrote poems and middle school students composed essays on "Why America Should Honor Our Veterans." Contests were judged by the school faculty and win-

ners were selected at each grade level to participate in our Veterans' Day parade to be held on November 11, 1999. Two weeks before the parade, teachers displayed the children's work to help build background and heighten interest in the project.

The mayor of Whitehall is a graduate of St. Gabriel School, and his children attend it as well, so arranging the various details and activities met with his immediate support. With the help of Mayor James Nowalk, we contacted several surviving veterans of World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Viet Nam War. They were willing to share their experiences at a middle school assembly, with the Mayor acting as moderator. What a thrill for our students to learn firsthand about each of these wars from an eye-witness prospective! Students were surprised to learn from the Viet Nam veteran that this was the first time that he had ever spoken publicly about his experiences. At the conclusion of the assembly, both the veterans and I were moved by the many students who came forward to shake hands with those they considered "genuine heroes."

We had been successful in setting the mood for our parade and wreath-laying ceremony and generating student interest as well as an understanding of the importance of this national holiday. Now the final details were put in motion. Flags were obtained from the local VFW for students to carry in the parade. A police escort was arranged since the War Memorial is located on a very busy main thoroughfare. Local media and news agencies were alerted to cover this special event. Students whose works had won the various contests were rehearsed for their part in the ceremony. We were even successful in arranging for one of our student-musicians to learn to play "Taps" on his trombone, since no trumpeters were members of our school band. Our wreath was ordered from a local florist and was beautifully decorated with miniature flags and patriotic ribbons. All was in readiness.

The day of November 11, 1999, dawned as a clear, sunny day perfect for our first Veterans Day celebration. As students lined up at the school with their flags in hand, led by our two wreath-bearers, I reflected on the many commemorative tributes

that would take place on this day throughout our nation. None would outshine the pride in the eyes of our students as they made their way along the streets to the memorial. Our group of students was cheered on by neighbors watching from their yards, which lined the route we followed. As the memorial came into view, we saw that a group of local residents had gathered around the memorial to witness this gesture of honor dedicated to those whose lives were lost in the line of battle.

Our program began at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, just as the first Armistice had in 1918. Students sang patriotic songs, read their poems and essays, and our student musician played "Taps." We laid our wreath, concluding with the chorus singing a versed rendition of "Taps." As we turned to leave, I caught sight of a few tears being shed, perhaps for the memory of those who had made the supreme sacrifice with their lives, but also for the inspiration these children brought to this Veterans' Day.

Cards, letters, and phone calls came to the school praising our efforts to make this holiday a memorable one for the community. Press coverage captured the spirit of the day and reinforced the enthusiasm such an event evokes.

Students were thrilled to have been a part of this special commemoration, which has become an annual tradition for our school. Although rain prevented our outdoor celebration this year, we held a memorial service in the church and laid the wreath the next morning. Parents, neighbors, and local citizens continue to praise our commitment to honor the veterans, serving the community in this special way. We have demonstrated to the community not only an awareness of the historical significance of this holiday, but also the desire of our youth to rekindle a tradition that our founding fathers of Whitehall established when they planned for this memorial.

In an era where so much negativism is associated with our youth, how very fitting it is to demonstrate to our citizens the commitment that can be generated within our students when given the opportunity that such an event affords. In seeking ways to demonstrate our Catholic identity through community

service, we can take our message of value-based education directly into the hearts and minds of the public. With careful planning, anything is possible, and everyone is a winner.

Let's Have Fun This Summer

Florence Schmidt
Principal
St. Andrew School
St. Paul, MN

School is out - summer vacation has begun! And more than thirty children are back in school - or at least at Maternity of Mary-St. Andrew School's Summer Creative Fun Program. Meeting in the air-conditioned portable classrooms, which have been transformed from fifth grade classrooms into a summer program setting, children of our school's working parents are enjoying a variety of fun activities this summer. And after running the program for three years, we are convinced this is a "win-win" situation for parents, students, and staff.

Our school adopted a summer day-care program three years ago to serve the needs of students enrolled in our school. We accept students entering our Kindergarten through sixth grade (although our school is a preschool through eighth grade program during the regular school year). The students have parents who work full-time and need a safe, affordable day care program for their children. Our school is an urban school in St. Paul, Minnesota; currently there are 425 students enrolled for the next school year. Our mission as a school is to provide a quality, affordable education for all children. We recognize that parents

are the first - and primary - educators of their children and that, as our societal demands change, we must each out to parents and give them help as needed. Parents do not have work hours which are only 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. (our current school times), or have the summer off. So we strive to bridge that gap and provide a good program for their children. Parents go to work knowing that their children are safe and the children don't spend the summer home alone watching television.

Since we had access to an air-conditioned building that we could use for our program, we decided to build a program that could take care of children as early as 7 a.m. each weekday and end at 5:30 p.m. In choosing staff to run the program, we opened the opportunity to our current teachers. One teacher stepped forward and has undertaken the lead teacher position. While the administration does the hiring of staff and aides and handles the finances, the lead teacher has set-up the daily running of the program. This year we have the lead teacher and three other teachers sharing the position, so that they all can get vacations and workshops in during the summer. We also employ five high school and college students as aides and always have at least two aides and one teacher on staff at all times. We pay competitive wages to keep quality help. Our aides have been with us in previous years and the children look forward to seeing them again.

Our daily program includes a simple breakfast about 8:15 a.m., time in the media lab, a group activity, outside games (which the aides take turns planning and directing), and lunch. This is followed by a group reading time, where the latest book is read by the teacher and quiet time with lights out, where children nap, read, or play quiet games depending on their ages. There is also pool time (we set-up two portable pools each day and then use the left-over water to water our "pizza garden" planted by our students and one of our parents). There are more group activities, "star of the day" reports, an afternoon snack, and outside play.

We also have special activity days, which include bringing your "wheels" to school. The children bring bikes, scooters,

or roller blades one day a week and are able to ride around our large asphalt playground. Each week also has a special theme which provides the direction for many of the activities during the week. This year the drama teacher came in for two weeks and helped the students put on "Noah and the Ark" which she wrote and directed. Every student had a part and enjoyed presenting it for their families on a special afternoon.

While the parents furnish bag lunches on most days, the children look forward to McDonald's and Domino's Pizza lunches two days a week which we bring into school. The school furnishes the morning breakfast, milk at lunch, and an afternoon snack.

Field trips are also an important part of the program. The children have enjoyed trips to the planetarium, science museum, a trip down the Mississippi on the "Jonathan Padelford," roller skating, and the art museum. A special walking field trip is also taken for an ice cream cone on a hot afternoon. Sometimes we rent buses to take us, other times we have parents and staff who drive.

Is our program successful? In the three years, we have enjoyed a full house. Parents know that they must register early to get into the program, and we only accept children who are registered in our school for the next school year. We send out the initial registration in March and ask for a $25 deposit to hold their place in the program. This initial registration gives us an idea of how many aides to hire, etc. What is the cost of the program? We charge $27.50 per day (7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.) or $110 per week if paid on Monday. There is no break for additional children in one family, nor do we have scholarship help at this time. What are the benefits of this program? These include:

- A safe, creative program for children during the summer;
- Summer employment opportunities for our staff which encourages teacher retention;
- Financial advantage for our school; and
- Student retention in our school.

While we do not intend to make a profit on the program, it has been a financial plus for our school. The tuition covers all staff salaries, breakfast and snack food, and miscellaneous supplies. It has also allowed us to make some improvements to the classrooms, such as new carpeting. What is the key to a successful program? That is easy! A quality lead teacher, great aides, and supportive parents! We are all winners in the program.

Character Education

Nancy Tattner, Ed.D.
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Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School
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Within the past decade, there have been many calls for the reform, renewal, or restructuring of schools focusing on academic achievement. The aim of our nation's schools is to prepare students to think and to learn; to gather, organize, and analyze information; to apply this knowledge to problem solving. Schools embed these objectives in their curriculum frameworks, but the success of schools still remains a topic of discussion, dissection, and criticism. What seems to be lacking is the commitment to foster character development in our youth. The teaching of moral values, also known as character education, is an inescapable, inherent part of a teacher's professional assignment. No one questions the value of teaching mathematics, science, language arts, or the social sciences. Educators accept these as core subjects, imperative for the development of the mind. Character education should be valued like these areas of content, integrated across the curriculum as a matter of obligation, as having a claim on the conscience of the individual and school community.

Character education should be included in the philosophical underpinnings of the schools as they evaluate their goals. One goal is to instill universal values in students, thereby pro-

moting a more compassionate and responsible society. Education and values are inevitably intertwined. Educators are recognizing the importance of fostering good character as a keystone to effective education. Therefore, the true goal of education is to graduate young people who have great intellectual knowledge, are highly creative thinkers, and are honest, caring, and responsible citizens. The latest research is affirming the concept that educating the heart as well as the mind produces well-rounded individuals. Proponents of character education agree that schools have to put character, virtue, and discipline at the top of their agenda. Since basic morality is slipping out of our society, it is our responsibility, as educators, to put character education back into our schools. Whether referred to as character education or as social and emotional learning, the recognition of positive student character is critical to the success of any academic program. Social attitudes and value about self, others, and work will help students cope with ongoing life events and situations.

Studies and reports describing the condition of our schools state that schools are failing not only academically, but morally. Attempts at school reform are unlikely to succeed, therefore, unless character education is given high priority. The formation of good character continues to be a great concern today and needs to become a primary goal in any school setting. The moral condition of our present society is prompting the necessity of teaching values in schools. The two main causes that have created such an interest in character education are the decline of the family and the troubling trends in youth character. In the face of social crisis, the implementation of character education can help develop good character in the young. Schools can become the vehicles to help children understand core values, to adopt or commit to them, and then to act on them in their own lives. All members of the school community play a vital role in this endeavor. Teachers must inspire and encourage students. Parents must become involved in education. Leaders must influence an environment that will promote character education. Students can also be positive role models for other students. Through continuous collaboration and increased cooperation among the

key participants, character education can be integrated into the curriculum, thereby resulting in improved student behavior and achievement.

It is the responsibility of educators across the nation to focus on the ethical development of children, thereby teaching our children value and virtues that will make them responsible, caring, likable human beings. There are many problems facing our youth today. Students need to learn the habit of courage and justice so as to stop the epidemic of cheating, bullying, and violence. We must combat the serious problem of disrespect for authority and attitudes of defiance. Peer cruelty has been on the rise. Children insult, hurt, and pick on the weakest member of the group. In many situations, problems are solved through physical violence as well as extensive use of inappropriate language. Students need diligence, self-discipline, self-control, and perseverance in order to tackle difficult assignments and should devote their time to successful learning. Poor discipline, unruly classrooms, vandalism, drug use, teen pregnancies, and academic deterioration are all problems that can be resolved through the moral reform of the schools. The compelling reason to pursue character education is to motivate individual students to perform, to reach their potential, and to succeed. This is the basis of ensuring productive citizens of tomorrow.

Based on the this research which was part of my dissertation, the following mission statement was created:

At Our Lady of Lourdes
We believe we are created in
God's image
And therefore we are good.
We believe we are
God's hands in the world and
We create our future
We will be known by our
Respect, responsibility, and
Our right choices.
With God's help we believe

We can make our lives
And the lives of those around us
Richer by sharing our
Talent, integrity and love.
We begin today!

Daily, the administration, the faculty, and staff, and the student body, recite our mission statement. Banners are hung throughout the school, with signs that read "respect," "responsibility," "right choices," "character," "commitment," and "conscience." We have implemented the program WiseSkills (1-888-947-3754) as part of our curriculum. It is a school-wide character-building program that imparts to our students the importance of making wise decisions in and out of school. This program unites parents, school, and community. It creates a positive school climate and it helps manage behavior problems proactively. This program is organized into eight monthly character themes and thirty-two weekly skills. It is teacher-friendly since it comes with ready-to-go activities and lessons that take thirty minutes of class time weekly.

This 2001-2002 school year will be my third year implementing the program. I have seen a wonderful transformation in my school. I have a kind, respectful student body whose students genuinely care for one another. All my students know the definition of character: doing the right thing when no one is looking. When a conflict arises, my students do not fight; they do not use violence. They are taught to use WISE, an acronym that stands for "words and ideas to settle and explain." The outcome of this program has been a more compassionate and responsible group of children. My faculty and staff challenge the mind and touch the heart of each individual. We truly believe in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.: ". . . intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education." Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School is a school of character.

Fun in the Sun at St. Paul's Summer Enrichment Program

Rosemary Vahey
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St. Paul Catholic School
Leesburg, FL

The Fun in the Sun Summer Enrichment Program was started in June 1999 at St. Paul's Catholic School in Leesburg, Florida. St. Paul's mission is to educate, support and enhance all parish children from Lake and Sumter Counties academically, spiritually, emotionally and socially. The program certainly achieves this goal during the summer months when parents have to work

Many parents were at their wits' end as to what to do with their children over the summer months when they still had to work. They cited several unsafe and emotionally damaging incidents that had occurred from lack of good baby sitters.

The program was started to help them out. However, after starting the program, St Paul's experienced several other positive outcomes.

- It provided a safe and enriching environment for students while their parents work.

- It has become a good money-maker for the school. The first year the school netted $1,800.00, the second year $3,200.00 and over $5,000.00 is expected this summer. Since St. Paul's does not have income over the summer months but still has expenses, this has been a great financial boost.
- The program has provided employment for two teachers. Other years these teachers, who need to support their families, found minimum-wage jobs, which they hated. Now they enjoy using their talents and skills to everyone's advantage.
- The program is open to any child in the parish, not just school children. After attending the program, some parents and children have liked it so well that they have enrolled their children in the school. Thus it is a good recruitment tool for the school.
- It provides opportunities for students who need extra help in reading and math to improve their skills and not regress over the summer.
- It continues to build a faith community reaching out to fill the needs of others.

Students assemble each morning from 7:30-8:30 a.m. A light but nutritional breakfast is served during that time. At 8:30 enrichment begins with math, reading, arts and crafts, physical educational activities, and religion. An example of a typical math period would include review lessons, math games, and math competitions in small groups as well as individually. Examples of language arts activities consist of daily journal writing, reading books both silently and with partners, and doing activities based upon the books read, often using the computer lab and internet, and writing and performing skits.

Afternoons were full of fun activities. Students board the parish bus and set off for places that working parents could not take them during the workday. Two days a week, students splashed and swam in the local community pool. Other afternoons they went bowling, roller-skating, hiking, and to the local

library and parks. Our local library offered wonderful enriching free activities such as: Lyndell the Magician, puppet shows, and visitors from Epcot and Disney. Many times these activities were correlated with reading activities at school.

Since Vacation Bible School also runs for two weeks during the summer school schedule, children also attend Vacation Bible School for those two weeks; morning enrichment activities are canceled, but afternoon activities continue.

Almost every other week an all-day event at a nearby theme park is scheduled. Children have enjoyed a day at Sea World, Rock Springs, Silver Springs, and train rides on the Mount Dora Doodle Bug. All local theme parks were contacted and gave substantially reduced rates.

During the first year of the program approximately twenty students were in regular attendance, but that number has grown to approximately forty students per day. Last year the program was expanded to include middle school children. Parents are asked to identify the weeks students will be attending. Fees are assessed on a weekly basis of $80 per week and must be paid at the beginning of the week. The fee includes everything: breakfast, snacks, all field trip expenses, use of the bus, summer school insurance, school supplies, etc. Parents still find the program cheaper than hiring a baby sitter and don't feel guilty about having to work.

When the middle school program was started two years ago, it was only for three children who did not pass their grade mainly because their work habits during the year were unacceptable. St. Paul's does not believe in social promotions, so it was either attend summer school and improve or repeat the grade. These three children were asked to concentrate on the subjects they failed and to do intensive remedial work. They, unlike the other children, were expected to do homework every night and take tests. All three passed and did considerably better the next school year. None of them had to repeat summer school again, even though they said they enjoyed it more than the regular school year. Last summer only one student failed the grade and had to attend summer school.

The summer session runs for eight weeks (excepting two weeks at the end of school and two weeks before students return in the fall). One disadvantage is that maintenance crews need to hustle to get all those summer maintenance chores done in a short period of time. But with good planning, it can be done.

This year on the last day of summer school, one fourth-grade boy summed up his feelings about the program by saying, "Gee, I wish I didn't have to stay home next week. That's boring."

Home Base

Ned Vanders
Principal
Holy Trinity Catholic School
Dallas, TX

Home Base is what's happening in the Middle School curriculum at Holy Trinity Catholic School in Dallas, Texas.

WHAT IS A MIDDLE SCHOOLER?

What is a middle schooler?
I was asked one day.
I knew what he was
But what should I say?

She is noise and confusion.
She is silence that is deep.
She is sunshine and laughter,
Or a cloud that will weep.

He is swift as an arrow.
He is a waster of time.
He wants to be rich,
But cannot save a dime.

She is rude and nasty.
She is polite as can be.
She wants parental guidance,
But fights to be free.

He is aggressive and bossy.
He is timid and shy.
He knows all the answers,
But still will ask "why."

She is awkward and clumsy.
She is graceful and poised.
She is ever changing,
But do not be annoyed

What is a middle schooler?
I was asked one day.
He is the future unfolding,
So do not stand in the way.

(An eighth grade middle school student)

Middle School is building the bridge between elementary and secondary schools. It is a transition school which bridges the elementary school and high school for students sixth through eighth grades that is developmentally appropriate for young adolescents. Middle School is a small community of learning that is intellectually challenging and supportive of students' needs. It provides information, skills, and motivation for adolescents to learn about themselves and their widening world. Middle School is a Home Base for emphasis on increasing students' learning capabilities, independence, responsibility, self-discipline and personal values before moving on to the high school.

Home Base meets daily for thirty minutes. The sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade students are under the supervision of their respective homeroom teachers. The whole Middle School

has Home Base at the same time. This permits flexibility in bringing the classes together if necessary.

Below is a brief listing of activities for Home Base. More information on those activities along with additional activities can be found in the references cited.

- Improving organizational skills Studying for tests
- Holding classroom meetings
- Planning, organizing, and implementing classroom service projects
- Doing a personal coat of arms
- Sharing successes and accomplishments
- Completing the phrases: "If I were older," "My favorite place," "When I make a mistake."
- Displaying "Proud of" bulletin boards
- Drawing a "class mural" depicting things the class does in common
- Creating a classroom newsletter
- Making advertisements or commercials in which students sell themselves
- Making time for friends
- Doing student interviews
- Creating a caring community
- Taking care of myself
- Documenting the highlights of my life
- Spending money.

References

Borba, M. (1989). *Esteem builders.* Torrance, CA: Jalmar Press.

Canfield, J. , & Siccone, F. (1993). *101 ways to develop student self-esteem and responsibility* (Vo1. I). Boston: AIlyn and Bacon.

Siccone, F., & Canfield, J. (1993). *101 ways to develop student self-esteem and responsibility* (Vol. Il). Boston: AIlyn and Bacon.

Pennies From Heaven Stewardship Program

Lynette Varner
Principal
St. Lawrence Catholic School
Muncie, IN

The "Pennies From Heaven" stewardship program began at St. Lawrence School on the suggestion of a parent. It continues to be a great way to teach our students about their role in the assistance of others in our community. The following is a list of steps we have found beneficial in keeping the program alive in our small parish school.

In August at the first teacher's meeting the staff discusses and chooses a list of charities to help for the year. One teacher serves as a liaison and works with parent volunteers. This teacher keeps the staff updated on special events and presentations through monthly reports at staff meetings. A parent volunteer contacts local businesses for prizes (some suggestions: food certificates, $5-$10 toys, video rental coupons). The parent volunteer contacts charities to set up the check presentation appointment and then invites a representative from the designated charity to join us for Morning Gathering when the entire school meets for prayer. The representative tells us a little bit about their organization and how the children's funds will help them help others. We chose as a staff to try to fund local charities that do

not receive much outside funding from the government or foundations. We also try to select charities that serve different populations, such as the local shelter for battered women and the Mental Health Association. Now, it was time for the children to begin their stewardship program.

Children drop coins into five-gallon glass jar located outside of the office. As they put in coins they put their name on a ticket and put it in the box. On the morning of the presentation, one child's name is drawn from the box. They receive a prize and announce the amount of the check as they present it to the charity representative. Our children have learned about local agencies who help those with cancer, agencies who help feed the homeless and indigent, agencies that provide education and work to the handicapped, and about the pediatric unit at our local hospital. After each presentation the tickets are put into another box, which will be used for a drawing at the end of the school year. In the past a "boom box" and a bicycle have been donated by local stores for end-of-the-year prizes. During the months of January through May we have scheduled a "Casual Day" in which the students may wear casual clothes if they donate $.25 to the charity of the month.

One very successful event held in September was our "Penny Battle." Jars labeled with each classroom name were placed outside the office. The following is a set of guidelines we used during this weeklong fundraising event.

- Pennies and paper money is positive.
- All silver: Nickels, dimes, quarters, half dollars, and the new dollar coins are negative.
- The class with the highest positive total wins. Remember: Pennies + dollars - silver = total. Some classes may be in the "negative' because the silver is deducted from the pennies and dollars.
- Children can put money in any jar. Some will put silver in other classroom jars to help put them in the negative.

- Once money is in the container it CANNOT be removed or cashed in for dollars or anything else.
- The class with the highest positive amount was treated to an ice cream party.

The money (over twenty-one containers for twelve classrooms) was loaded into the trunk of a car and taken to a focal bank where it was counted it in less than one hour. The total funds raised from the children and families of 150 students was $1,982.73.

Our hope is that this small effort to assist the needy in our community will foster a lifetime commitment to stewardship in our children.

"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."

(Matt. 25.40)

Apostolic Service Program

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A critical element integrated into the teaching of the Catholic faith is the need for "good works." St. James wrote, "Faith without works is dead." Encouraging Christian service, in addition to providing a strong academic program, must be a focus for Catholic schools. College admissions officers look more and more for a three-pronged balance when evaluating applications: academics, activities, and service. That concept of unselfish giving must begin at the elementary level.

At St. Catherine of Alexandria School in Riverside, California, we believe that children must learn to respond to their baptismal call to holiness and service to the human family. In order to accomplish this, we incorporate the traditional support for the Holy Childhood, the canned food drives during the holidays, etc. However, for the past three years, we have become intimately involved in assisting the Head Start Program within Riverside Unified School District. Although this program is partially funded with federal monies, it is administered by the local school district. There are approximately 150 children enrolled in the Head Start program at five different elementary school sites. They have been "adopted" by the students and families of our school.

The relationship began when a member of our parent community took a position as health coordinator for the local Head Start program. After being in her position for a few weeks, she approached our school administration with stories of extreme poverty just a few miles from our middle class community. The need for clothing, food, sundries, and, especially, dental hygiene became our focus for the Thanksgiving Food Drive of 1998. The original request was to help the families at one Head Start site. The staff and Parent Organization felt we had enough families within our own community to provide for all 150 families. Guided by a "needs list" the school provided a grocery bag filled with food for each family. Recognizing that not all these families would have cooking facilities, the main course was a pre-cooked ham. Potatoes, beans, canned goods, and fresh fruit were also collected. Included in the bags were some basic toiletries and gift certificates for local grocery outlets.

When thank you notes were received from these preschoolers made with handprints, doodles, and scribbles, the children of St. Catherine's asked if they could help with something for Christmas. Money was collected and a gift was provided for each one of the Head Start children. To present these gifts, the Head Start administrators and school personnel arranged to transport some of the pre-school classes to St. Catherine's for an afternoon Christmas sing-a-long, complete with cookies and punch. Junior high students played "Santa and his elves" as three- and four-year-olds were presented with their gifts. This was an eye-opening experience for many of our children. They had no idea that children the ages of their toddler brothers and sisters could be so grateful for such small gifts. No Nintendo video games, or boom boxes, or huge baby dolls with all the accessories — just a $3-$5 truck, or basic Barbie. Most of the Head Start children were nervous and hesitant during all the commotion and activity. Many of them had NEVER opened a newly bought toy still in its original wrapping.

After the holidays, a request was made for winter clothing. Bag after bag came in with jackets, sweaters, sweat suits, blankets, and warm outfits of all sizes. The Head Start staff spent

two days sorting and allocating these items. St. Catherine's staff members helped make arrangements for some local dentists to screen students and provide some basic dental care. When the program had to undergo its Program Quality Review by the State of California, the school administration was interviewed as a community resource. A nice byproduct of this involvement is improved relations with district staff in other departments who are aware of the support provided by St. Catherine of Alexandria School.

In November of 1999 and 2000, the food drive was again directed for Head Start. Instead of collecting money for the Christmas gift, a portion of our wrapping paper fundraiser was set aside so the parents were not asked to donate again. Remembering the anxiety experienced by may of the little ones when they visited our school, we decided to send members of the Student Council and 8th grade class out to deliver the presents and bags of food to the Head Start classes at their own schools. Again the students were struck by the ability of small children to survive with less than basic supplies. It became an all day event as they visited each of the five schools, singing Christmas carols and sharing gifts. They returned to St. Catherine's with story after story of happy tears and grateful hearts. These visits have generated a keen interest and support for continued community service with personal commitment. As part of their service hour requirement for graduation, several students have volunteered to collect food on an ongoing basis or to help out after school with children less fortunate than themselves.

In May 2001, the parent who originally began our involvement asked if assistance could be sent to a family of six children being raised by a single grandfather. The children ranged in age from three to ten years old. One little girl came to school in the same jumper every day for two weeks. It was washed every night, and occasionally she had a different blouse with it, but it was always the same jumper. There was no money for proper shoes and clothing. The youngest children had never seen a dentist. Basically, this family had nothing. A brief note generated over $3,000 in new and used clothing, $500 in SCRIP,

and over $500 in toys and sundry items - in less than one week. So much was collected that five additional families received clothing and several other families were given some of the items or food not needed by the original family.

This outpouring of generosity deeply impressed the Head Start staff and administration. On June 19, 2001, St. Catherine of Alexandria School community was recognized by Riverside Unified School District for its continued support of these preschool children and their families. At a designated portion of the local school board meeting, the administration was presented with an award titled "Superintendent's Honor Roll." Included in the presentation were remarks of gratitude for the enormous support and generosity of the parents and families within the school community, for their "compassion and commitment towards the children and their families of Riverside Unified School District's Head Start/State Preschool program." While many of our own families make tremendous sacrifices to provide a Catholic education, they continue to be exemplars of sharing and sacrifice to their children. The lessons are more than just helping the poor. Our students learn that old clothes can have a new life; that what they might consider a little kindness makes a tremendous impact in another's life; that no gift goes unappreciated. More importantly, they learn the difference between what they need and what they want; of how good it feels to share with others and to be of service.

It is most very gratifying to see the generous response of our students and their families in times of need. This particular project is an example of how we try to live the Vision of the Diocese of San Bernardino, to impact the lives of people in our families, our neighborhoods, and our communities so their lives may be filled with hope.

Forensic Program

Beatrice Weiland
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St. Anthony of Padua Parish School is committed to providing a Catholic education of high academic, spiritual, and moral values to the families of our community. It is a small, preK-8 school located in northern Wisconsin. One of its challenges is to provide a quality curriculum that challenges and stimulates its middle school age students, and gives them a variety of choices and experiences that are positive and build their self-esteem.

Two years ago, we introduced a speech/drama/forensics class at the seventh/eighth grade level. Prior to this, students who did not take band at the local public junior high school had a one-hour study hall daily. We believed these students would benefit from a speech/drama/forensics class. First, this class would make better use of their time. Second, it would give them a multitude of opportunities for creativity, self-expression, group work, public speaking, critical thinking and evaluation. Third, it would strengthen our middle school curriculum and help with retention of students. Fourth, it would give students a chance to try their hand at forensics and drama, both of which are available at the public high school. Without this early experi-

ence, our graduates were less likely to be involved in these activities in high school.

Based on the availability of the part time teacher, the class meets for thirty minutes a day, four days a week. This still allows students a thirty-minute study hall. This could easily be adjusted to either three or five days a week. The length of the class could also be increased.

The class starts with speech at the beginning of the year. The class is divided into groups. Each group is given an index card and writes the words: Family, School, Hobbies, and Dislikes on each corner of the card. Then each student interviews another student and uses the four words as the basis of the interview. The student then stands up and shares what he has learned about his fellow student. In this way, the student learns what will happen during the year — students will experience getting up in front of others and expressing themselves.

Here are some activities that are included in the early class work. Students work on this for several weeks, depending on the time and the make-up of the groups. First, each group selects a children's story and develops it into a short play. As part of this activity, the group gathers props and costumes, memorizes lines, learns to speak with expression, and to relax in front of others. These groups perform the plays for the pre-school and lower elementary children. They also perform at a Home and School Association meeting. This is good publicity for the middle school students. A second activity is Completing a Story. In this case, the story introduction is written by the teacher. Working in groups, students complete the introduction which is then judged by the teacher and the other groups. The groups do the same for the middle and ending of the story. Each part is voted on by the class. The group whose ending is picked as the winner gets to dramatize the story. This exercise emphasizes that stories have a beginning, middle, and ending. A third activity is Puppetry. Acting in teams, the students create puppet shows and present them to the lower grades as well as the Home and School Association. These activities are usually completed prior to Christmas

after which the class begins to prepare for the forensics competition.

St. Anthony is a member of the Wisconsin High School Forensics Association - Middle School Division. Using resources available through the association, students pick their Forensic Category before Christmas. Work begins immediately after the Christmas break. Students may choose from the following categories; Demonstration, Eight Minute Persuasive Speech, Extemporaneous Reading, Extemporaneous Speaking, Four Minute Informative Speech, Group Interpretation (Play Acting/Readers Theater), Storytelling, Interpretation of Poetry, Interpretation of Prose, News Reporting, Non-original Oratory, Solo Acting, or Special Occasion Speech. The Level I Meet is in February. Students who do well advance to the Level II Meet in March.

Students prepare for Level I by performing in front of their classmates and teachers, and a team of judges selected from staff and parents who critique the work and make recommendations. For Level II, students perform again for their classmates and teachers, other classes, and at the public library. Guidelines, activities, explanations, and evaluation forms for all categories are found in the Wisconsin High School Forensics Association-Middle School Division Handbook.

When the Forensics competitions are completed, students begin work on their class play. They select the play, try out, create props, make or find costumes, work the lighting, learn to apply make-up, and advertise and promote their production. Every student has a part to play in the production. Having a student as the Assistant Director is also a big help.

There are ongoing evaluations by the students and teacher at each phase of the class. This is a very important component of the class. Students learn to assess and evaluate their own work and the work of others. The students' evaluations are viewed as suggestions. Groups are not required to follow the suggestions. The rules of the class while simple are very helpful. They are: 1. Listen to the directions of the instructor; 2. Participate in all activities; 3. No put downs; 4. Respect fellow classmates. There are also consequences for following or not following the rules.

The class is graded. The grade is based on student participation in all presentations, completion of assignments, daily attendance, individual work, and group participation.

This has been a wonderful addition to our middle school curriculum. It provides experiences in writing, speaking, performing, memorizing, evaluating, cooperating, sharing, learning to take criticism, building self-confidence, and reaching out and trying new experiences. It is also relatively inexpensive. We are able to use a teacher who is already on staff. There is an annual membership fee in the state organization. Several resources have been purchased. Many of the props and costumes are donated or made with volunteer labor. There is an admission fee for the spring performance and concessions are sold. This money is used to offset costs.

This class has had a positive impact on our middle school students. Students advancing to seventh grade are excited about this class. Students entering high school are grateful for the experiences they had in this class and more of them are participating in drama and forensics at the high school level. It is an example of how St. Anthony School is committed to providing a high quality academic education for the children of the community.

Below are some of the resources that are very helpful in developing a strong speech/forensics/drama class. Resources include:

Wisconsin High School Forensic Association Middle Level Handbook

This 75-page handbook includes guidelines, activities, explanations and sample evaluation forms for all categories. It is updated annually with page inserts, so keep the original handbook. This booklet is received once the $100.00 state membership fee has been paid. The address is: Mr. J. Peter Shaw, Wisconsin High School Forensic Association, 10 E. Main St., Evansville, WI 53536. Phone: 608-882-6004. Fax: 608-882-6661.

Plays, The Drama Magazine for Young People
An annual subscription is $30.00. As an active subscriber one can use and photocopy the plays with no royalty fees.

The following are available through PLAYS, INC., Publishers, 120 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116-4611, Phone: 617-423-2168; Orders only: 888-273-8214.

Humorous Plays for Teen-Agers, Christina Hamlett
The Big Book of Comedies, edited by Sylvia E. Kamerman
MIME Basics for Beginners, Cindi and Matthew Straub
Mystery Plays for Young Actors, John Murray
Costume: An Illustrated Survey from Ancient Times to the 20th Century, Margot Lister
An Introduction to Drama, Edmond J. Dixon (founder of The Drama Club Theatre Co., Inc; Barrie, Ontario) email:thedramaclub@home.com. Website: www.thedramaclub.net. Phone: 877-746-8963.
52 Fabulous Discussion-Prompt Cards for Reading Groups, by Laura Robb, Scholastic.

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